



Lewis & Clark

C O U N T Y



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Andy Hunthausen

Michael A. Murray

Derek Brown

City County Building 316 North Park

Helena, Montana 59623

406.447.8304

Fax: 406.447.8370

March 16, 2009

The Honorable Senator Joe Balyeat
Chairman Senate Business, Labor, and Economics Committee
And Committee Members
Montana Senate
PO Box 200500
Helena, MT 59620-0500

Re: HB 331 – “An Act Revising Laws Relating to Licensed Establishments”

Dear Senator Balyeat:

The Lewis and Clark County Commissioners are in support of HB 331. Public health disease prevention requires commitment to protecting the nations food supply and consumer protection needs from the federal to the local level. Our health department has participated in food recall audits, national food borne illness outbreak investigations, and conducting inspections of local facilities and evaluating risk of food borne illness.

Lewis and Clark County spends approximately \$153,000 from local tax dollars to fund the program. Locally, just 16% of the cost of disease prevention in licensed establishments is funded by license fees. This is an unfair burden on local tax payers for a state mandated program.

Administrative rule-making can set up realistic algorithms for equitable assessment of fees within the framework established in HB 331.

We urge your support of this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Andy Hunthausen, Chair

Mike Murray

Derek Brown



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

1930 Ninth Avenue
Helena, MT 59601
PH: 406.4HEALTH or
406.443.2584
Fax: 406.457.8990

March 12, 2009

To: Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs Committee

RE: HB 331: Short Title: Revise laws relating to licensed establishments for health purposes

Dear Mr. Chairman Balyeat & Committee Members:

The Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department sanitarians are the "boots on the ground" that we rely upon to protect the food supply from contamination and the public from food borne illness. They conduct regular inspections of licensed establishments and provide food safety training to food handlers. They investigate food borne illness and respond to consumer complaints. They audit the effectiveness of national food recalls, and participate in national outbreak investigations.

Under the present funding structure, the County receives \$76.50 per food establishment license. The reimbursement is the same regardless of the size or complexity of the operation. One inspection of a full service restaurant may take several hours. License fee disbursements to this county fund cover only 16% of the program cost. This shortfall requires approximately \$153,000 annually from local tax dollars. The squeeze that results forces competition for resources that has the Board of Health choosing which disease should be prevented.

The Lewis & Clark City-County Board of Health supports HB 331. Administrative rule-making can set up equitable assessment of fees within the framework established in HB 331. It will also provide the means to sustain a vital public health service to the citizens of Montana.

Please help pass HB 331.

Sincerely,

David Krainacker MD, PhD
Chair, Lewis and Clark City-County Board of Health

Cc: Melanie Reynolds, Health Officer, Lewis and Clark County

"To Improve and Protect the Health of all Lewis and Clark County Residents."